

HELIANTHUS

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HELIANTHUS

by [LilithShade](#)

Summary

The disorientation, the heat flushes, her increased sense of smell. The way her skin itched, her body ached. It was all part of a rare magical condition. A latent mutation, one that had chosen now of all times to present.

Hermione Granger was an Omega.

Notes

Happiest of Birthdays to my wonderful and caring friend Missy. I hope your day is filled with joy. I cannot express how difficult it was to write this fic without talking to you about it! I lost count of the amount of times I almost ruined the surprise to talk to you about one headcanon or another.

Thank you so much to my Alpha Charlie9646 and my Beta Caitlincheri28 for helping me create my first ever Sevmione fic!



HELIANTHUS

A SEVMIONE FANFICTION BY LILITHSHADE



HELIANTHUS

Hermione Granger's life was great. She had just turned twenty five, her career was going well and she had just been informed in confidence – by her head of department no less – that she was due to be promoted in the coming weeks. She was happily single, had great friends, and her parents were not only alive, but content in Australia. Yes, her life was going great, right up until it wasn't.

That morning, she had finally received a long awaited diagnosis for a perplexing illness, one that had only seemed to worsen over the weeks past. Only it wasn't an illness at all, nor was it a disease, or a virus. As it turned out, what she had was not a thing that could be cured. The disorientation, the heat flushes, her increased sense of smell. The way her skin itched, her body ached. It was all part of a rare magical condition. A latent mutation, one that had chosen now of all times to present.

She was an Omega.

Hermione had left St Mungo's with no more than a frighteningly antiquated pamphlet on what to expect, a sympathetic look from the Mediwitch, and a slip of parchment with the address of an obscure apothecary at which she could purchase the potions required to help suppress her Omega pheromones.

At first, she couldn't believe the diagnosis. Surely the Healers had been wrong. Afterall, she was twenty five years old. There had not been a single recorded occurrence of either an Omega or Alpha presentation past the age of seventeen. She would know, she had read all about them.

However, over the course of that afternoon they had subjected her to numerous tests – both invasive and benign – and determined that her presentation as an Omega had been delayed due to the war and the trauma she had sustained.

In the end, she could no longer deny the insurmountable evidence of her newfound designation.

As Hermione passed through the Leaky Cauldron she could feel the gaze of the pub's patrons upon her. It was not uncommon, even all these years later, for her reputation as a war heroine to garner recognition. However, something about the attention she was now subjected to felt off and the heavy weight of unease settled over her.

Passing by one of the shadowed booths near the rear of the pub, she caught sight of an older wizard. From the corner of her eye she saw the way his nostrils flared as he inhaled deeply. Her skin crawled and she was overcome by a sense of imminent danger. Increasing her pace, her hand slipped into her pocket and reached for the safety of her wand. Her hand wrapped around the familiar vine wood and the invigorating sense of her magic pulsed through her. She made for the pub's exit, not stopping to chance a look over her shoulder as she hastily tapped her wand against the series of bricks that would admit her entrance to Diagon Alley.

As Hermione walked by Mr Mulpepper's Apothecary, she couldn't help but wonder why the establishment did not stock the brews she was after. She had never even heard of an Apothecary off the main street. Had she simply never spotted it before, or perhaps, she considered, it may have been a newer business. Afterall, there had been an influx of new stores in the wake of the war. Looking back down at the slip of parchment in her grasp, she double checked the ink scrawled directions and confirmed that she needed to head down Horizont Alley.

Turning off the main stretch, she made her way down the much narrower alley. Each storefront she passed growing darker and far more ominous the closer she came to the intersection of Knockturn alley.

Coming to a halt before the address listed on the parchment, Hermione closed her eyes and inhaled a deep, wavering breath as she tried to summon her Gryffindor bravery. With a sharp exhale, she opened her eyes and gazed up at the storefront before her. The shop's windows were filled with a vast array of herbs – both magical and Muggle in origin – bunched and strung from brass hooks. Her gaze lifted and above the windows, engraved into the dark timber and inlaid with what appeared to be silver leaf, her eyes fell upon the shop's name - Helianthus Apothecary.

Hermione recalled her studies from Herbology. Helianthus, from the Greek Helios, meaning sun, and anthos - flower. Sunflower, she thought, her mind leaping to another tangent. Sunflowers symbolised adoration, loyalty and longevity. The flower itself held many healing properties, a simple tea brewed from the leaves was astringent, diuretic and expectorant, it could be used for the treatment of-

Stop .

She needed to stop. She always did this, ever since the war. Her anxiety would take hold and her thoughts would spiral, grasping onto some benign fact she had once read about and rambling through any and all related knowledge. It was as if her mind was trying to force her to forget whatever it was causing her distress. It wasn't the worst compulsive behaviour to have developed, she mused, even if her friends were forced to plead for a cease to her incessant babbling from time to time.

Gathering herself, Hermione took a deep, calming breath and entered the Apothecary. The room was bathed in low lighting. She wouldn't go as far as to call it dingy, but instead, rather soothing. The scent of herbaceous plants and florals hung heavy in the air. She was surprised however, to find the aroma was not overpowering, unlike the sickly sweet scent of the flowery perfumes she had become so averse to since her presentation. This scent was earthy, natural.

"Miss Granger," a familiar voice drawled. "To what do I owe this... *pleasure* ?"

Hermione's mouth fell slack as her eyes snapped up to meet his. "Professor Snape!"

The wizard stepped out from a doorway she could only guess led to his potions lab, leveling here with a flat expression "I think you will find, I have not been your professor for some time."

What were the chances, she thought, that the proprietor – and master potioneer in residence – of the only Apothecary in London that could brew the potions she required, was Severus Snape.

Instinctively, she took a step closer to him and found herself inhaling deeply through her nose. The earthy scent that permeated the air in the room seemed to only grow stronger. She felt herself relax, the anxiety of a moment prior receding into the recesses of her mind. And then, abruptly, a strange sensation radiated out from the junction of her neck and shoulder. It began as a deep itch and soon grew to an ache that was mirrored on the other side of her body. Through the haze that had fallen over her mind, she pulled forth a vague recollection of a Mediwitch explaining the location and function of her scent glands.

She was scenting, her body releasing her Omega pheromones into the surrounding air of its own accord. Vaguely, she recalled being informed her body would respond in such a way when met with the pheromones of an Alpha - it was why she was here, to receive a suppressant to avoid such an occurrence.

Taking another step towards Snape, her eyes trained on his face. He remained as unreadable as ever, his facial expression never shifting from one of seemingly bored indifference. But then she saw it. The way his nostrils flared as he inhaled deeply, his pupils dilating ever so slightly in response.

Fuck .

The earthy scent of the room she felt so drawn to was not, in fact, a collection of herbaceous potion ingredients. It was *him* . Severus Snape was an Alpha.

She braced herself for what was to come. However, the moment stretched on and curiously, Snape had yet to react at all how the old pamphlet had warned an Alpha would. He had not been consumed by his aggression, nor had he lost control of himself, giving in to his baser urges. Perhaps, she thought someone dejectedly, it was possible she didn't smell as enticing as other Omega's.

The wizard spun quickly on his heel, his long black robes snapping around his body as he did so. With a single, long stride he was at the wall of shelving behind the counter that held various jars and vials of liquids. He stretched up with one arm to reach something on a higher shelf, the sleeve of his robe falling back as he did so. Her gaze skimmed over the faded grey blemish that was the remnants of his dark mark, but found she was not at all bothered by the remnant of his past. Instead, her attention focused on the way the muscles and tendons of his forearm moved beneath his pale skin. His arms, they looked so strong, undoubtedly toned from the year of repetitive use preparing ingredients and stirring the contents of numerous cauldrons. Distantly, she was aware of the low sounds that slipped from her lips as she found herself wondering what it would feel like to be held by those arms.

Snape slammed two vials down on the countertop before her, snapping her attention away from her errant thoughts.

"Take it," he hissed through clenched teeth.

She began fumbling for her coin purse, desperately searching for the Galleons needed to pay the wizard.

" *Now* ," he growled, grasping one of the vials for himself, hastily uncorking it and throwing his head back and downing the contents in one swift motion.

A small voice in the back of her mind knew that under normal circumstances she would never consume the contents of a vial without first verifying the substance within. However, Snape's tone left no room for argument and her hand reached for the unknown potion without hesitation.

Popping the cork out of the vial with her thumb she brought it to her lips and took a tentative sip. Instantly, her face screwed up in disgust. She inhaled one last deep breath through her nose, the earthy scent invading her senses and renewing the calm haze that had washed over her. With a quick exhale, she forced herself to tip the remains of the foul liquid into her mouth and swallowed with some difficulty.

Gradually, she felt the potion take effect. The ache in her glands diminished and she noted the way the wonderful, earthy scent receded, yet did not dissipate entirely. The veil that had been drawn over her mind retreated, allowing her to think straight once more and Hermione realised that it was undoubtedly a pheromone suppressant they had just both taken.

Her brows pinched as her head tilted to one side in thought. It was obvious that he had seen the state she had slipped so easily into once subjected to his own Alpha pheromones, why else would have taken the draught himself with such urgency. She recalled the tone his voice had held as he had growled out his command for her to take her own portion of the draught. The low sound had reverberated through her, called to her. At that time there had been not a single doubt in her mind that she would willfully follow his command. However, she had not stopped to think why the wizard had required her to take her suppressant with such haste.

She chanced a glance at her once professor, his demeanor had certainly shifted in the moments since she had consumed the potion. With the benefit of hindsight and the haze no longer clouding her mind, she could now recall the tension in Snape's stance, the rigidity of his taut muscles and the way his knuckles had turned white as he had gripped the edge of the countertop that separated them.

She had affected him, just as he had her.

Without uttering another word, Snape turned his back on her once more and returned his attention to the vast shelving behind the counter. She watched him as he sorted through a collection of glass vials. With a flick of his wrist he sent an assortment from the shelf, levitating their way over his shoulder before settling themselves on the countertop before her.

Hermione looked over the collection of vials, more of the suppressant she had just taken, some calming draughts as well. Both potions the Mediwitch at St Mungo's had informed her she would require. However, at the realisation that one key draught was missing – a very specific draught, one designed to temper her rampant sex drive when she would inevitably enter her first heat – she felt a fierce blush heat her cheeks.

Mortified, Hermione mumbled her request for the additional potion to her old professor.

In response, Snape arched a single brow. "Will this be your first heat, Miss Granger?"

"Yes," she replied hastily, averting her eyes as she was consumed by embarrassment.

"And," he began with a drawl. "I feel confident in my assumption that you, as knowledgeable as you are in all things, believe yourself capable of undertaking this event without the assistance of another?"

Hermione felt her jaw tense as a familiar sense of indignation rose to the surface. Pursing her lips, she nodded once in confirmation.

The wizard's eyes fell closed and he exhaled a sharp breath through his nose. His tone conveying the evident exasperation he felt as he said, "That potion will barely help."

She swallowed hard, not for the first time since receiving her diagnosis, terrified of what was to come. "Then what will help?"

"You need another," he replied matter-of-factly. "Preferably an Alpha to whom you are amenable. My designation is nowhere near as rare as your own, you should have no trouble finding yourself an agreeable partner to share your bed for the duration."

"I... No, I couldn't possibly. I don't even know any Alpha's, other than yourself of course."

"You will find that most of us refrain from flaunting our designation, Miss Granger. Now you yourself have presented, you will undoubtedly encounter others like myself. Your best option is to find someone you can at least trust with your wellbeing, even if you find them otherwise... *unappealing*."

"I can handle this on my own," she declared, lifting her chin in a show of defiance.

He pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed before opening his eyes and staring at her for a long moment.

"You will be insatiable," he said at last. "To the point of agony."

"I will cope."

The wizard growled once more in frustration, the low sound stirring something deep in her core.

"If you must insist upon being a stubborn, reckless Gryffindor," said Snape. "You should, at the very least, ward yourself thoroughly within your own home. Not only so that no one may enter, but also to ensure that you may not leave. For once the heat begins... and I cannot stress this enough, you will no longer be in your right mind."

"I'll be fine," she insisted, gathering up her potions from the countertop and dropping in their place enough Galleons to easily cover their cost. Without awaiting her change, she held her head high, turned on her heel and left the Apothecary.

She had not been fine.

As her heat had approached, Hermione had isolated herself. Warding her home as Snape had directed, she had ensured not a soul could enter, nor could she leave.

She had been so confident in her decision.

So naive.

When at first it had started – the all consuming heat that coursed through her body and begged for relief – she had tried to relieve it on her own. Her attempts had taken the edge off the persistent need that built within her, at least at first.

Soon however, it became too much. Rather than bringing some semblance of relief, her own touch had caused her skin to crawl.

It had felt as if her own flesh had ignited from within. She had resorted to laying on the tiled floor of her shower, the cool water cascading over her naked body as she desperately sought some relief from the inferno that threatened to devour her.

She wasn't sure how long she had remained there – hours, perhaps days – before she had found herself at her own door, screaming for someone, anyone, to release her from her misery. She had clawed at the timber, violent screams tearing from her lungs, until her nails had ripped from their beds, bloody and broken.

As she had lay there on the floor – curled in on herself while the inferno receded, only to be replaced by pain and exhaustion – she was forced to admit to herself that Snape had been right. *Alpha* had been right. She couldn't do this alone. She needed someone. Needed *him* .

Near three months had elapsed since that first, horrendous heat. It was an experience she wished never to repeat. She knew what she needed to do to avoid a repeat of the torturous experience. She needed an Alpha. It had taken her far too long to return to this place, her stubbornness – her pride – preventing her from admitting to him he had been right. But now, her supply of suppressants was dwindling and she had exhausted her options - her heat was due to begin in just a few short days.

Hermione stared up at the signage of Helianthus Apothecary, lamenting how her life had irrevocably changed since last she stood in that exact spot. The promotion she had all but been assured, was given to another. Her superior had apologised, unable to hold her eye as he had explained that there were those in the Ministry who had raised concerns that her *condition* may compromise her integrity. She had complained immediately and was horrified to discover she had no legal grounds to stand upon. She was told simply that someone of her *disposition* should be grateful they were allowed to remain employed at all. She had been furious.

Inhaling a deep, calming breath, she stepped forward and pushed open the door – the small brass bell chiming as she did so – and entered the Apothecary.

As she crossed the threshold her eyes fell immediately upon the dark haired wizard behind the counter. She noted the way he had inhaled deeply through his nose and fought the urge to do the same. The rich, earthy scent of him filled the air. It called to her. An intoxicating temptation. A salvation.

Her feet moved of their own accord and Hermione found herself approaching him, entirely unsure of what she may do or say once she reached the counter that separated them.

The door chimed, a cold draft blowing in from the alley. Her muscles seized and she halted mid step as the scent of another filled the air. It stood in contrast to the earthy scent she now knew. This scent was like ash, heavy and lingering. Her nose scrunched up in distaste, the overpowering smell not at all to her liking, although undoubtedly that of an Alpha.

Before her, she saw Snape's demeanor shift rapidly. His shoulders squared, posture straightening, as his face twisted into a scowl. Unsure of what to expect, Hermione braced herself before turning to see who had entered the store.

She inhaled a sharp gasp, her eyes widening in surprise as her gaze fell upon Cormac McLaggen.

"Huh," McLaggen said, the corner of his mouth pulling into a conceited smirk. "Who would have thought, Hermione Granger, an Omega."

Instinctively, she took a step backwards from McLaggen, the man putting her immediately into a state of unease. However, the wizard either did not notice her discomfort or chose to ignore it, for he took a large step forward and crowded in on her.

"I smelt you in the crowd," he said, leaning forward to whisper breathily by her ear. "Never have I got so hard, so fast, in my life."

Disgusted, Hermione leant back from him, her lip curling in distaste. Her attempt at a retreat only seemed to amuse the man however, his grin widening in response.

"I thought I'd lost track of you for a moment there," he said, his gaze lifting to glare over her shoulder. "The putrid stench of Death Eater in here almost masked your scent."

"That will be enough, Mr McLaggen," Snape drawled, stepping out from behind the counter. "Miss Granger is clearly not interested. Now, leave my store."

"Interested?" McLaggen laughed. "Why in Merlin's name would I need her to be interested? One word, one command in the right tone, and the bitch will be on her knees, begging for my cock."

Immediately incensed, Hermione opened her mouth to defend herself. However, before the words had formulated, a low growl ripped from Snape's chest as he stepped out in front of her.

"I said, *leave*." Snape hissed through clenched teeth.

From where she stood behind Snape, she saw McLaggen inhale deeply through his nose. "You have no claim on her, her scent is her own."

Suddenly, the swirling mix of Alpha pheromones grew too potent. A strange sense of calm took hold as her vision unfocused and she felt herself fall to her knees.

"Granger," she heard a voice call distantly. "Hermione... Come back to me."

Alpha .

Her eyelids fluttered and slowly her vision came back into focus. Snape was before her, she realised, and he too had sunk to his knees. As the heavy fog that clouded her mind began to clear, Hermione noted the delicate way the wizard cradled her head in his hands, his eyes darting back and forth between her own. It occurred to her that she had never before seen that look of concern on his features, much less directed toward her.

"W-What happened?"

Seemingly relieved that she had spoken, Snape released his hold on her and rocked back onto his haunches.

"When *McLaggen* -" he said, spitting the other wizard's name. "When he and I became combative, the combined Alpha pheromones we produced became too much for you, you slipped into subspace."

Subspace. *Fuck* . The antiquated information pamphlet – the one she had been provided the day her presentation had been confirmed – had briefly mentioned the phenomenon. It was a state an Omega could be forced into by an Alpha, a complete state of docility. An uncomfortable shiver ran the length of her spine as she realised the extent of her vulnerability.

"Come out back," said Snape, standing and offering his hand to her. "I'll make some tea."

Hermione perched herself upon one of the room's timber stools by the large central table of the potions lab. Snape moved to collect a somewhat rustic tea service from the small adjoining kitchenette. As he sat on the stool beside her own and served them both a cup of steaming tea, Hermione gnawed at her lower lip, her left knee bouncing anxiously.

Unable to contain her curiosity any longer, she asked, "What did he mean when he said my scent was my own?"

The wizard released a sigh, lifting his cup and taking a long sip from his tea before he spoke. "The scent of an Alpha on an Omega can act as a deterrent for other Alphas, it may prevent them from approaching."

"Will you- Could you..." she trailed off, willing herself to find the words needed to convey her request. "I wish that McLaggen was the first to treat me that way, but he wasn't. Even Beta males have been treating me differently since the news of my status was leaked to the Daily Prophet."

"I'm not blind to the way Alphas look at me, like I'm nothing more than an object they desire. They don't see me as a person, just a thing to be claimed. Despite my diligent use of my suppressants, I've been growing concerned that something-" She took a deep breath, steadying her nerves. "That something just like what happened today, or worse, would happen. Perhaps they would leave me alone, if you..."

"You want me to mark you?"

She looked into his eyes and she saw the evident concern within their deep, dark pools. "Please."

"If..." Snape sighed. "If I do this, it is unlikely another Alpha will be willing to pair with you for your upcoming heat."

"I-" She averted her gaze, unsure how to confess the truth of what she had come here to ask of him. "I don't want another Alpha."

"You cannot do this alone. Surely, ever stubborn as you are, you will not subject yourself to that again."

"You misunderstand me," she said. Finding her confidence, she met his eye. "I don't want anyone else. I want you, Alpha."

Hermione saw the way his eyes widened a fraction in surprise, the sole indication he had even heard her statement until she saw the way his Adam's apple shifted as he swallowed.

"Surely there is someone more suited to the task."

"No," she replied with newfound confidence. "You are the only Alpha I have met, the *only* one, that hasn't treated me like- like some... some *sex toy*! You're the only one who has treated me with a modicum of respect! You told me, before my last heat, to find someone I trusted. When it comes to this, it's you I trust."

Eyes falling closed, he pinched the bridge of his nose before running his large hand down his face and exhaling a deep sigh.

"Snape, please," she begged.

"On one condition," he replied. "Please, call me Severus."

She offered him a genuine smile in response. "Thank you... Severus."

The moment his name left her lips, she saw the corner of his mouth twitch upward in the briefest of smiles. It occurred to her that before that very moment she had never before seen the man smile. Right then, she swore to herself that she would endeavour to coax forth that from him as often as she could.

"You are welcome to join me here, in my home," he said, lifting the teapot to refill their cups. "For your heat, that is."

She was unsure of what to make of his offer. He must have easily read the uncertainty in her features, for he swiftly elaborated. "The property has many leyline wards thanks to the location, those can easily be reinforced, adapted to our needs. We would also be able to take advantage of my fully stocked Apothecary and potions lab. Afterall, it is likely we shall require both hydration and nutrient replenishment potions throughout the duration, not to mention pain draughts and healing salves for after the fact."

At hearing his words, Hermione's brows rose and she felt the warmth of a flush blossom across her cheeks. "I- ah... I suppose that would only be logical. To stay here, that is."

"Are you currently taking a form of contraception?" he asked.

The conversational manner in which he asked such a question caught her off guard. She blinked slowly before she stammered, "Well, er- Y-yes. A standard monthly potion regiment."

Severus frowned, standing from his stool and sending his teacup to the sink with an absent flick of his wrist. "That will not be sufficient. Alphas and Omegas are exceptionally fertile."

"Of course we are," Hermione grumbled. Just one more piece of vital information the staff at St Mungo's had neglected to share.

"I will brew a more effective draught," Severus announced, flicking his wand and conjuring an array of potions ingredients on the bench before him.

Hermione stood, clearing her own teacup and the remains of the tea service away before returning to the workbench just in time to see Severus lighting a fire beneath one of the room's smaller cauldrons. Instead of returning to her stool, she stepped over to a small bench adjacent to the one at which he worked. Backing up against the piece of furniture, she placed both palms against the timber top and hoisted herself up to take a seat atop the bench. From this vantage she could see into the cauldron. She had always loved to watch the Potions Master brew, even back at Hogwarts.

Placing his wand down on the worktop, Severus reached up, running his long fingers through his hair and gathering the loose strands together before tying it back. With his hair pulled back from his face, Hermione's gaze was immediately drawn to the wizard's neck and the brutal scar that marred his pale flesh just shy of his jugular. Her body shuddered and she willed herself to focus on something other than Nagini and the attack that had so near claimed his life.

Severus' gaze met her own and he arched a brow. Abruptly, she realised she had been staring at the man and she tore her eyes away, instead focusing intently upon the potions ingredients he had gathered.

"It's a somewhat recently developed habit," Severus offered as he began thinly dicing the root of a plant she did not recognise. Putting my hair up while I work, that is."

It was obvious that the wizard had thought Hermione had been staring at his hair, rather than the angry, raised scar that had been left by Voldemort's monstrous snake. Unwilling to correct

him however, she simply nodded in response.

Dropping the plant roots into the cauldron, Severus combined several ingredients into a large mortar and pestle and began grinding them into a paste.

"After the war," he began, breaking the silence. "I was faced with the reality that my life was no longer in immediate and unrelenting danger. For so long, I had focused solely on what was needed to survive. Then, suddenly, I found myself free of both the puppeteers that had – until their demise – orchestrated each and every aspect of my poor excuse for a life. Faced with the prospect that my life was once more my own, I made the decision that I should, at the very least, strive to look after myself. I was not unaware of the state I kept myself in. My hair was in a horrid state from lack of care and the near constant time spent above a simmering cauldron and the various fumes they would emit."

She would be lying to herself if she said she hadn't noticed the change in his appearance. At first she had tried to blame it on some pheromone fuelled attraction. But, in the months since her presentation as an Omega and Severus re-entering her life, she had now encountered a handful of Alpha's, not one of whom she had felt drawn to as she did the man who stood before her now.

When she looked at him now, the wizard looked so similar to how he had during his days as professor, yet there were such key differences. One of which was that his hair certainly no longer held the greasy quality Harry had so often criticised throughout their youth. In fact, his shoulder length locks now appeared to have a distinctly silken quality, the deep black now peppered with a fine streaks of silver that originated from each temple. She wondered if the hair was indeed as soft as it looked and found herself overcome with the desire to comb her fingers through the strands.

Severus extinguished the flame beneath his cauldron and Hermione shook her head from side to side in an attempt to clear her errant thoughts. She watched him as he methodically filled a series of small glass vials, before stepping forward into arm's reach of where she sat and offering out a ladle of the pale blue draught.

She cocked a brow at the wizard, having expected him to send her on her way with a vial to be used in the coming days.

"This will provide protection for the next month. It would be best to take it now so we are not caught off guard," he paused and she saw the way his nostrils flared as he inhaled her scent. "Your heat is close. Your scent, even in the time you have been here, has grown more... *alluring*."

She took the ladle from him and tipped her head back, swallowing the potion in one in one swift motion.

An anxious knot twisted in her gut as she thought about what he had said. If her scent truly was growing stronger, how was she supposed to go out there? How could she walk about knowing there were other wizard's – other Alpha's – that may wish to take advantage of her just as McLaggen had hoped to today.

"Please," she began, hopping down off her place on the bench and taking a short, tentative step forward. "Severus, will you mark me?"

This wizard did not immediately object to her request. She watched his eyes dart to the place on her neck where she could feel her gland itching just beneath the surface. The tip of his tongue slipped forth to wet his lower lip before he trailed his eyes up once more to meet her own. Her breath caught in her lungs as she stood, unsure of what was to come. Then, he moved in one fluid motion, closing the distance between them as his left hand reached up to tangle in the wild curls behind her ear, guiding her to tilt her head to the side as he swept her curled locks back over her other shoulder, revealing the column of her neck.

"Are you certain this is what you want, Miss Granger?" he asked softly, his warm breath ghosting across her skin.

She opened her mouth to reply. However, the only sound she managed to produce was a low, drawn out moan.

Severus groaned. "I need your verbal consent, Hermione."

"Y-yes," she replied breathily. "Oh Gods, yes."

The tip of his nose just barely caressed the skin atop her gland, before the heat of his tongue met her flesh as he licked a path across the junction of her shoulder and neck. The low, guttural sound he made upon tasting her melded with her own keen moan. When the wizard did not release her from his grasp – instead, proceeding to suck greedily in a way which would undoubtedly mark her freckled skin – Hermione felt her knees grow weak as a fierce warmth blossomed and threatened to consume her.

Her heat had begun.

Severus noticed the shift, whether by the building heat that now noticeably flushed her skin, or by the potent scent of her Omega pheromones, she was unsure. However, she allowed him to maneuver her body without question. His hand slipped from where it had been tangled in her hair and moved to her waist, pulling her forward against the strong plains of his body to support her weight. Distantly, she was aware that he had acquired his wand with his free hand and had begun to mumble under his breath as he hastily cast a series of spells. Logically, she knew the charms he now cast were of vital importance – to secure the premises for the duration of her heat – though she couldn't bring herself to care. Her hands moved to trail over his form, exploring the hard peaks and valleys of the lean, yet surprisingly well toned body the wizard hid beneath layers of traditional black robes.

Evidently having completed his task, Severus tossed his wand atop the benchtops behind her and groaned, "You will be the death of me, witch."

The arm that secured her waist tightened, pulling her flush against him as his other entwined once more in her wild mane and angled her head up to meet his. His eyes locked with hers for a brief moment and then his lips were upon her.

The kiss sent a shock right through her, right to her core and ignited the deep ache of arousal that had sat smouldering while in his presence. She inhaled sharply through her nose, his earthy scent flooding her senses and causing a keen sound to rumble low in her throat before she deepened their kiss eagerly.

The wizard's hands went to her waist and he lifted her with ease. Without thought, Hermione's legs wrapped around his hips, her ankles locking behind his back. Her sudden movement had caused Severus to shift his stance, ripping an impatient whine from her as she felt the heat of his firm erection as it pressed against her centre.

"I am certainly not what one would call inexperienced. I have been with others," he mumbled against her skin, as he trailed kisses down the column of her neck. "But never before have I laid with an Omega. I- I have never experienced a rut before. In that sense, I am as new to this as you are."

Distantly, Hermione was aware that his admission brought her a sense of comfort, as if this was an experience they were embarking upon together. However, in that moment, all she could focus on was the too abrasive material that itched her skin and prevented her bare skin from meeting his.

As the burning steadily grew to a peak she remembered all too well, she whimpered softly. She couldn't let that inferno claim her, not again. "Please, Severus, I need you."

She saw the way he glanced at the stairs that undoubtedly lead upstairs to his bedroom. No, that was too far. She couldn't wait, she needed him - Needed him now. The muscles in her thighs tensed and her legs squeezed his body, drawing a deep moan from Severus as she ground her pelvis against his confined cock.

Severus growled, a low and threatening sound that only served to awaken something primal within her. His grip on her firm, he spun on his heel and backed her up until she felt the edge of the room's large, central bench press against the supple flesh of her arse. In one swift motion Severus leant forward, her body moving with his, as he swept the contents off his benchtops with his arm. Glass vials and jars of potions ingredients shattered on the floor as he eased her down onto her back in their place.

Desperate, panted breaths forced their way from her lungs as she fumbled with the buttons of her blouse. Her frantic fingers clearly incapable of unfastening the useless sodding things, she looked up at Severus with pleading eyes as she began to claw at the fabric of her shirt.

With a flick of his wand he banished her clothes and Hermione sighed in relief as the cool evening air provided a modicum of respite from the all consuming heat that threatened to claim her.

"Please," she heard herself beg once more.

Severus didn't waste time in disrobing, simply parting the traditional black robes at the front before he swiftly unbuckled his belt and pulled his cock free of his trousers.

Hermione's eyes grew wide and her jaw fell slack the moment her gaze fell upon his erect cock. She had heard that Alphas were large, but she had not fully grasped the concept until that very moment. Somewhere, in the far recesses of her mind, she knew that outside of her heat his size would have intimidated her. However, in that moment, the sole thought she could conjure was how wonderfully and mercifully full she would feel with him buried to the hilt within her.

The burning washed over her in waves, coaxing her into action. She brought her feet up, planting her heels onto the solid timber of the benchtop and allowed her knees to fall to each side. Upon seeing her presented to him in such a way, a deep, guttural sound escaped Severus. He wasted no more time. Strong hands grasped her hips and pulled her forwards, the edge of the desk biting into the supple flesh of her arse. She watched as he took his thick shaft, pumping himself once, twice, before angling the head down to sweep between her already slick folds.

Instantly, she whimpered at the contact. "More, please. Gods, I need more."

He lined himself up at her entrance and, without hesitation, thrust his hips forward, sheathing himself within her in one swift motion before he stilled to allow her a moment to adjust.

Back arching off the table, her mouth opened, yet no sound escaped. The sensation that overcame her was indescribable. The burning heat did not diminish, instead morphing, sending her nerve endings alight in the most intoxicating of ways.

Severus drew his hips back slowly. She thought to protest, not willing to relinquish the feel of him inside her. However, before she could formulate a sentence, he slammed back into her with such force the wooden bench made a sharp sound as it shifted across the stone floor. In response, Severus leant forward, his palms coming down upon each of her shoulders to hold her in place. She caught a glimpse of the pure desire that gleamed in his dark eyes, before he began to pound into her with unrelenting force.

She lost herself to the feel of him, to the sounds of their bodies as they gave themselves to the thrall of her heat. It did not surprise her that her release arrived rapidly, the coiling tension of her burning arousal coalescing low in her belly. His name fell from her lips as she cried out, her orgasm crashing down upon her in sudden, all consuming bliss.

A whimper left her as he pulled himself from her depths, leaving her suddenly empty and wanting. She made to lift her arms, as leaden as they were, in an attempt to reach for him. However, before she could do so, she caught sight of the furious way in which he pumped his engorged cock.

Oh, she thought, a brief moment before he found his own release. Her eyes grew wide as she watched thick rope after thick rope of his seed land upon her body, coating her outer lips and stomach. Feeding the hot liquid trickle down her sensitive slit, she whimpered once more, suddenly desperate to know what it would feel like to have him find his release within her depths.

"I did not think it best to finish inside you this time," Severus said after a moment, as if sensing her thoughts. "I've never knotted before, and thought our current predicament would

not be the ideal situation to be stuck in for the next quarter hour or more."

At that, she looked down at his still hard cock and saw the huge, swollen knot at its base. Her orgasm having provided her a moment of clarity from the mental haze that was her heat, she knew he was correct. However, she wanted nothing more than to feel him swell inside her, for him to be locked securely behind her pelvic bone as he spilled his seed deep inside her core.

Pulling her gaze away from the thick knot of the wizard's staggeringly engorged cock, her eyes met his. The intense look he gave her caused her walls to clench, her body still unsated. She made to move, to sit up and reach for him. However, Severus reached out, placing his hand down upon her abdomen, fingers splayed as he applied just enough pressure to hold her in place. With his thumb, Severus began to trace gentle circles against her skin, smearing the sticky substance that now coated her stomach from his own release. Collecting some of his seed upon the pad of his thumb, Severus shifted forward, spreading the fluid across the junction of her neck and shoulder before massaging it into the skin above her scent gland.

"No other Alpha will bother you now," he said in a low, dangerous tone. He leant forward, his still hard cock pressing against her stomach and his face hovered mere inches above her own. "Anyone who scents you, will know you are *mine* ."

Mine , she thought. Yes, she wanted that. For her to be his, and he to be hers. His Omega. Her Alpha. Two halves of a whole. A quiet voice in the back of her mind wanted to beg him to claim her fully. To sink his teeth into the flesh and rupture the gland beneath. She knew what it would mean for her – for the both of them – they would be irrevocably bound to one another. Instinctively, she knew without a doubt that it was what she wanted, what she required even. Nothing had ever felt so right. Yet, she knew it was too soon to ask it of him, so she suppressed the desire.

Severus placed a chaste kiss to her forehead, the tender action in stark juxtaposition to the dangerous tone he held a moment prior. He stood – not even bothering to tuck his still hard cock back into the confines of his trousers – and scooped her up into his arms with ease. As he cradled her to his chest in a bridal style hold, she couldn't help but lower her head to rest against his chest, her eyes falling closed. Vaguely, she was aware that they were now moving and that, feeling the shift in the wizard's weight, he carried her up a flight of stairs. However, all she could bring herself to focus on in that moment was the steady thrum of his heart beating against her cheek and the rich earthy scent that seemed to permeate her very being.

As Severus placed her down upon what felt to be a wonderfully plush mattress, Hermione's eyes snapped open to take in her surroundings. She found herself in the centre of his large, four-poster bed. The room, his room, was dark – rich timbers and low lighting from an ornate brass candelabra that adorned the far wall – yet, it was not uninviting. Hermione felt immediately at ease in the space, the concentrated scent of his Alpha pheromones enveloping her as she lay upon his soft bedding.

His hands left her body as Severus rose to stand at his full height by the bedside. The moment his skin left hers, she felt the smouldering heat reignite as her need soared to painful heights once more. Swallowing hard, she turned to face him, to beg for his touch. However, the moment her eyes met his, she knew that he had recognised what she required of him.

Shrugging his robe from his shoulders, Hermione watched the billowing, black fabric fall to the floor. His eyes did not leave her as he began to methodically unfasten the buttons at his cuffs, before moving to those that bisected his torso. As he removed the shirt and dropped it to the floor atop his cloak, her eyes grew wide. Severus Snape was a lean man, but his Alpha designation had left him undeniably well toned. She saw the way the muscles of his forearms shifted beneath his pale skin as his hands went to the hem of the unfastened trousers that hung low on his.

As she watched him kick his leather brogues from his feet and lower his pants and trousers to the floor, her own hand dipped between her thighs, her burning need becoming all consuming. Her eyes fluttered closed, a low moan escaping her as a single digit slipped between her drenched folds. The realisation that the wetness she felt was not solely from her own arousal – but also from the seed he had spilled upon her body – only served to fan the flames of her need.

She felt the mattress dip and her eyes snapped open to find Severus on his knees, positioning himself between her thighs. And then, without even a single moment to voice her eager plea, he was buried within her once more.

She moaned at the welcome sensation as his thick cock filled her, stretched her. Severus leant forward, the fingers of one hand threading through the hair at the nape of her neck, the other coming to rest on the mattress near her head as he braced himself on one elbow. His lips met hers in a kiss far more tender than those they had shared in the wizard's potion lab, yet this kiss lacked none of their earlier passion. In that moment, Hermione realised it was not only her who needed him, but he too, needed her.

Severus shifted atop her, his hips pulling back from hers eliciting yet another low, drawn out moan from her before he sunk into her slowly once more. Her body now hypersensitive and intune with his, she savoured the feel of each languid thrust. As his pace began to increase she knew he was nearing his release.

"Please," she begged between panted breaths. "Severus, please. I need to feel you... God's, I need you to come- Come inside me."

In response to her desperate pleas the wizard groaned, a deep guttural sound, as his hips snapped forward, pounding into her with unbridled vigour. With each thrust she felt the knot at the base of his cock swell further still, stretching her in a way that should have been near unbearable. Yet, as his pelvis ground into hers – the action providing glorious friction against her swollen clitoris – it only served to send her over the edge. Hermione felt her walls tighten, gripping his thick shaft as her back arched, chest pressing up into his. Toes curling and limbs convulsing, her orgasm ripped through her like all consuming Fiendfyre.

Just as lucidity returned to her in the wake of her own orgasm, Severus slammed his hips forward, a strangled groan forcing its way through his clenched teeth as she felt his cock spasm and he came deep within her core. With his knot securely locked in place, she quickly realised his seed was left with no escape. As his cock continued to pulse, she felt herself stretch further still, her eyes widening as grew impossibly full. The pressure against her cervix, against her womb, made her lament the contraception potion she had taken. The

thought of his seed seeking its mark – the thought of her Alpha impregnating her – sent her rapidly over the edge once more as a fierce orgasm took hold.

As the shaking of her limbs subsided and her heaving breaths began to slow, she felt fatigue wash over her. Severus shifted, pacing a soft kiss to her temple as he slipped his arms beneath her body. In one fluid motion he flipped them so she lay atop his body, his cock still locked inside her. A satisfied smile pulled at the corner of her lips, in that moment entirely content as she collapsed onto his chest and allowed herself to be claimed by slumber.

When she woke, Hermione found herself alone in the bed. She sat up, pulling a light sheet up and around her naked body as she did so. It was strange, she mused, how different this heat was to the one she had endured on her own. She could still feel the flames as they licked at her nerve endings, yet the sensation now brought her no pain. She could smell him on her, the heady scent of her Alpha, and it calmed her rampant desire. The need was still there. An ember ready to reignite at any moment. However, at least for now, she felt satisfied and the all consuming haze of arousal had lifted from her mind.

She heard footfalls on the landing outside the bedroom door and looked up just in time to see Severus shouldering his way into the room, before closing the door with his bare foot. In his hands he carried a large silver tray topped with an array of small potions vials, a selection of fruits, and a clear jug filled with water. As he crossed the room towards where she sat atop his bed, Hermione noticed the wizard's attire. He had not, as she had first thought, dressed himself fully once more. Instead, the wizard wore a light robe, beneath which Hermione could now clearly see Severus was still nude.

Dutifully, Hermione swallowed the various concoctions her Alpha provided, feeling the hydration and nourishment revitalise her body. However, once she had eaten her fill of the fresh fruit, she could no longer ignore the growing need that had risen to the surface since his return to her presence. With one fluid motion she pushed the tray aside, before her hands made quick work of the tie that held his robe closed. Her palms splayed out against the firm planes of his chest as she pushed him down onto his mattress, swinging a leg over him to straddle his body before sinking down onto his already hard cock.

The days passed in the same pattern, the pair entwined in one another's embrace, enthralled by their carnal pleasure. They would break from one another only when their fatigue grew too great, and Hermione would wake to her Alpha's care. The wizard plied her with food and drink, ensuring she was thoroughly hydrated and her nutrients replenished. The longer they were together, the louder the voice in her mind demanded to be claimed.

As Severus thrust into her, he leant forward, his lips finding her scent gland as they had time and time before. However, when the wizard did not simply place a tender kiss before moving to her pulse point, but instead sucked the skin above her sensitive gland into his mouth, her resolve snapped.

"Please, Severus," she whined. "Oh gods please. I need you... I need you to bite me, claim me."

He stilled. *No*, her mind screamed as she began to panic. She had upset her Alpha.

Shifting his weight atop her, he swept her sweat damp locks back from her face to look in her eyes. "I can't. I *won't*. Not like this."

"Have I displeased you?"

"Oh Salazar, No!" he said, placing a tender kiss on the corner of her lips. "You're perfect."

"Really?"

"Yes, my Omega. You're such a good girl."

At his words of praise her walls clenched around him and he groaned. She pushed her desire to be claimed back into the recesses of her mind and allowed her to bask once more in the sensations as Severus pulled his hips back before pounding into her once more.

Hermione stood before the cafe's entrance, running her fingers anxiously over the folded edge of the parchment in her grasp. She shouldn't be nervous, she mused, not after everything they had done. But this? This was different.

Unfolding the now worn parchment for what felt to be the hundredth time, her eyes skimmed the elegant script of the letter – the one he had sent the day after her heat had ended, seeking permission to officially court her – before placing it back in her pocket.

Taking a deep breath, Hermione squared her shoulders and crossed the threshold into the cafe. Her eyelids fluttered closed as the myriad of fragrances hit her; the bitter aroma of coffee, the sickly sweet of the pastries, but beneath it all was him - her Alpha. She need not even lay eyes upon the wizard to know where he sat. Her feet moved, drawing her in the direction of the earthy scent she knew to be him.

A strong hand grasped her elbow and her eyes snapped up to meet his gaze, a shy smile pulling at the corner of her mouth.

"Hi," she said quietly.

Severus leant down, placing a lingering kiss to her cheek. "Hello, Miss Granger."

She felt her cheeks flush and saw the way his lip twitched in response. After the week they had shared together, locked in his home, the wizard knew all too well how being addressed in such a way affected her.

Leading them to a small table by the window, he held her chair out and waited for her to be seated before moving to take his own. Hermione gnawed at her lip, her anxiety taking hold once more. Reaching forward, she grasped the beverage menu from the centre of the table and began to fidget with the thick card.

"We should order something to drink," she began. "Yes, that would be good. What, with this being a cafe and all. It would be a bit silly for us to visit a cafe and not order anything to drink, wouldn't it? Should we just get something simple? I usually get a latte. Just one sugar. Not too sweet, you see. But, I guess- this being a special occasion and all... This is a special occasion, isn't it? Maybe I should try-"

"You're babbling, Hermione," Severus interjected, as he lifted a hand to wave over a young girl to take their order.

"What can I get for you both today?" The girl asked, a roll of parchment and what Hermione recognised to be the new make of a Quick-Quotes Quill hovering to her side.

Severus did not so much as lift his gaze to the girl as he drawled, "Latte, one sugar and a double shot long black, unsweetened."

"Thank you," Hermione said, finding herself honestly relieved that he had taken control of the situation.

"It is my pleasure, Miss Granger."

"Why did you name your apothecary after a sunflower?" she asked after a moment's silence.

She could have sworn she saw him blush, but as soon as the faint tint washed across his pale flesh, it was gone again.

"I am sure a swot, such as you are," he replied, arching one brow as if daring her to challenge. "Would be aware of the symbolism of the Helianthus?"

Hermione's own cheeks flushed, but she nodded in response.

"I thought," Severus began, his hand lifting to rub at the thick scar that marred his jugular. "That if I could have neither adoration, nor loyalty in my life, then at the very least I could hope for longevity."

The vulnerable admission caused her chest to tighten, an ache settling in her heart as she was overcome with the pressing need to reach out and comfort her Alpha. Hermione couldn't help but think that the man before her – the man she knew him as now – truly did deserve both adoration and loyalty. She couldn't help but wonder if he would ever permit her to be the one to give him those things.

"It also happens to be the scent of my Amortentia."

"Sorry, what?" Hermione asked, his confession startling her back to attention.

"Sunflowers," he said, averting his gaze. "They are what I have always smelt when brewing Amortentia, at least they have been ever since I presented."

"Oh," she replied weakly.

It had been many years since she had smelt the brew herself, she wondered if it had changed since her own presentation. If that scent of fresh mown grass had matured, just as she had. Perhaps, she mused, it now reflected the earthy musk of the man who sat before her.

Embarrassed by her own train of thought, she stirred the latte that had been delivered to the table and swiftly changed the topic. "Do you ever miss teaching at Hogwarts?"

"No," He replied dryly.

"Really?" she asked. "Not even a little? You're a brilliant Potions Master, Severus."

"If you had been forced to endure Longbottom's incompetence as a conclusion to every work week for five long, excruciating years," Severus drawled. "You might understand the extent of my sincerity when I say, I never wish to set foot in that classroom ever again."

Hermione recalled the way the Gryffindors had so often lamented their double potions on a Friday afternoon. She had never before considered, though, just how insufferable that experience must have been for their professor.

As the months passed, the pair shared increasing amounts of time in each other's company. Often their dates would end with Severus returning her to her door, a chaste kiss farewell. Occasionally however, he would accept her invitation and escort her inside. He had been stubborn at first, steadfast in his resolve to court her slowly, despite her constant reminder that they had already been intimate with one another. When at last he had conceded to her advances, Hermione had been both surprised, and immensely pleased, to find the passion they felt for one another was not in the slightest diminished by the absence of her heat and their potent pheromones.

Together, they explored not only their bodies, but their minds, learning each other in the most intimate of ways. They talked about her plans for her future; Hermione confiding in him that she no longer wanted to remain at the Ministry knowing her career there would never progress. When she had brought up the idea that she wished to take her knowledge – having previously studied wizarding law as a prerequisite to her current role in her department – and use her qualifications to make a change, Severus had been nothing but supportive. With his encouragement she had decided to endeavour to update antiquated laws surrounding Alphas and Omegas, and strive to introduce much needed anti discrimination laws into the Wizarding world.

Crossing the threshold into the large greenhouse at the Royal Botanic Gardens, they were overcome with the sudden humidity. Severus stopped, removing the jacket from his three piece suit, before slinging it over his shoulder with one hand. Hermione's arm wrapped around Severus' waist as his free arm lifted to drape across her shoulders – a position they had become accustomed to in order to compensate for her shorter stature. From the corner of her eye she cast an appreciative glance at the way the tailored waistcoat accentuated his tall, lean form. A small smile pulled at the corner of her lips as she recalled the first time he had taken her to a muggle restaurant. It had been a shock, seeing the wizard so immaculately dressed in fine Muggle attire, so used to seeing the man in his thick, black robes.

As the couple made their way around the greenhouse, Severus would pause briefly to bring various botanical specimens to her attention, indicating their various uses and properties, both magical and Muggle. There, by his side, Hermione could not describe the way she felt as anything but content.

The heat in the enclosed space was oppressive. Hermione was unsure if the flush she felt to her skin was from the greenhouse alone, or if it was an indication her heat would be approaching again soon. What she did know for sure, was that the way the humid

environment caused them both to perspire only served to increase the potency of their individual scents. Leaning into his side she inhaled deeply, the rich aroma of him distinct to her, even amongst the array of exotic plants that surrounded them.

Suddenly, she felt Severus stiffen beside her. She was just about to ask what was wrong, when she too caught the scent - Another Alpha.

"He's been following us, following me, since we arrived in Edinburgh," Hermione whispered.

"I know," Severus growled in response.

"I don't want it to happen again," she said softly. "What happened with McLaggen. I felt so... I can't-"

"I won't let it happen," he said through clenched teeth. "He won't come anywhere near you. Not while I'm by your side."

She stopped walking and stepped out from his embrace. Turning to face him, she folded her arms across her chest as she looked up into his dark eyes. "You can't always be there, Severus. Like some... some chaperone!"

The wizard's lip curled, an expression of distaste Hermione remembered all too well from her youth. "Do not doubt that I will protect you. "

"This is not about believing you capable!" Hermione pinched the bridge of her nose in exasperation. "You can't always be there, Severus. You *aren't* always there."

"What, exactly, do you mean by that?"

"This isn't the only time I've been followed," she confessed. "Nor was McLaggen the only time I've been accosted by some misogynistic arsehole who believed themselves entitled to my body. The other Alpha's have not stopped, Severus, despite you marking me with your own scent. I don't think they'll- it's not enough."

Severus sighed, his gaze landing over her shoulder on the giant Lily pads that covered the artificial pond. "I'm protective of you, Hermione, not just because my Alpha instincts compel me to be so." He paused, bringing his thumb and middle finger to press at his temples as he covered his eyes. "The last witch, the last Omega I... cared for, Lily Evans, was coerced into bonding with James Potter during her first heat."

She inhaled a sharp gasp. She had known of the past Severus shared with Lily, Harry had told her of the memories the wizard had divulged when he thought he would meet his end. However, she had no idea that Lily had been an Omega, nor James an Alpha. Not for the first time, she cursed the discussion of presentations being such taboo within wizarding society. If only it weren't considered such an indecorous point of conversation, perhaps then the laws surrounding it would not be so archaic.

"Is that-" She swallowed, gathering her courage. "Is that why you wouldn't claim me?"

"Yes," he said, his voice flat, masking any feelings he may hold on the matter. "If I ever lay claim on you, Hermione, it will be done so with your explicit consent."

"I gave you my consent!" she exclaimed, wincing at the whine in her tone.

"Consent under the influence does not count, Miss Granger," he said, a hint of his true emotion present beneath his otherwise stoic drawl. "And there is no greater influence than that of an Alpha and his Omega during a heat."

His Omega, he had said. She wanted to be his, she knew that to be infallibly true, influence or not.

"I am not under any influence now, Severus," she said, placing her hand on his chest, the staccato beat of his heart against her palm as she gazed up into his eyes. "I am of sound mind and I am telling you, *this* is what I want. You, Severus Snape, are *who* I want."

His hand captured hers above his heart, the other lifting to tangle in her wild curls as he pulled her forward, lips crashing down upon hers in a searing kiss. She moaned into his mouth as her knees grew weak and she leant her weight forward into his body. Too soon, Severus broke away, instead moving to rest his forehead against hers.

"I do not like to think myself a weak man," he began softly. "But I will not... cannot deny you any longer - cannot deny myself. When your heat next takes hold, Hermione, I will claim you as my own."

His promise caused something to stir deep within her. Her heart soared, all while the tension low in her belly coiled ever tighter as her arousal began to pulse through her veins. The once gentle heat grew, an inferno that took hold and consumed her from within.

"I think... It's coming soon, Severus. We don't have much time," she whined.

He understood immediately, placing one hand against the small of her back to ease her concern, but also to steady her as he guided her out of the humid greenhouse. The cool air outside the structure did nothing to lessen the heat that now coursed through her, in fact it bit at her skin painfully, the sudden contrast too much to handle.

Through the haze that had begun to fall over her, she realised that Severus was not guiding her to their Portkey location, but away from the buildings and to a copse of trees some distance away.

"Where-"

He hushed her, cutting off her feeble attempt at a question. "Our Portkey was not scheduled for another hour, Hermione. We do not have the luxury of time."

"Hold on," he said sternly, as he pulled her behind the large trunk of a tree obscuring them from the sight of any passing Muggles. "I am not used to Apparating such distances, but it cannot be helped."

She did as he had requested, hastily wrapping her arms around his middle as her face pressed into his firm chest. A sigh left her, feeling the pressure of his arms as he pulled her into a firm embrace. An instant later, there was the familiar tug of Apparition behind her navel, followed by the uncomfortable compression she swore one never grew used to.

Mercifully, the sensation passed in an instant. Vaguely she was aware that they were now in Severus' bed chambers, though her desire for the wizard – for her Alpha – had surpassed the extent that she could bring herself to be concerned by her surroundings. She threw her arms up around his shoulders, her mouth latching onto his neck as she sucked greedily against his skin. She felt the rumble of his chest as he growled at the contact.

She heard the low drone of his voice as he cast the series of spells required to ward the home for the duration of her heat. Then, suddenly, his wand was discarded and his hands were upon her, swiftly removing the clothing from her body. She reciprocated, stripping him with enthusiastic haste, caressing his body as she did so.

The moment they were free of the last of their clothing, Severus put his hands on her shoulders, turning her away from him to face his four-poster bed. She thought to protest – wanting, *needing*, to touch him – but before she had voiced her complaint his body was against hers. The warmth of his hard body pressed against her back, his evident arousal digging into the soft swell of the arse. His hand tangled roughly into her curls as he pulled her head to the side, exposing the long column of her neck. A low moan ripped from her throat as his mouth latched onto the skin above her scent gland. Her knees buckled at the fierce sensation that rippled through her body, though she did not crumble to the floor as Severus pressed his palm to her stomach, holding her against himself.

She needed him. God's, how she needed him. The fire pulsed through her veins, calling for her Alpha. As if sensing her growing urgency, Severus released his hold on her hair, the hand that had been splayed against her stomach caressing a path around her waist. Gooseflesh broke out along the surface of her skin, the fine hairs that coated her body standing on end as he trailed a path up her spine. Before she had a moment to comprehend his intent, his palm pressed firmly between her shoulder blades, pushing her forward.

Losing her footing, she fell forward, her hands flying out to catch herself as she landed on all fours atop his bed. A moment later, she felt the mattress dip behind her and his knee was between hers, knocking her leg outward to widen her stance. The shift in her weight caused her elbows to give out and her chest collapsed onto the mattress, her back arching as she did so. She heard an appreciative growl from behind her and an instant later, Severus was buried within her. Hermione moaned into the wizard's soft bedding as he gripped her hips, pounding into her at an unrelenting pace.

As her keen moans swiftly grew to rapturous cries, Hermione grew hyper aware of the cacophony of sounds that surrounded her; the frantic hammering of her own pulse in her ears, the way their flesh slapped against one another's. Though most of all, Hermione heard the pleased sounds that escaped her Alpha as he neared his release. The thrusts of his hips grew erratic as Hermione felt his knot swell within her. She slammed her own hips back against his, taking him fully, his fingers digging into her hips as he stilled. The feel of his cock

spasming within her, filling her with his hot seed, sent her too over the edge and she cried out with the force of her own release.

Severus maneuvered their bodies so they lay on their sides, his front to her back, still buried deep inside her as he held her in his embrace. As she lay there in his arms she felt satisfied, content. However, the moment did not last, as her orgasm provided her brief respite from the all consuming nature of her heat, and with it a transient mental clarity.

He had not kept his word.

"What is wrong?" Severus asked softly, pressing a kiss to her shoulder.

"You said you would claim me."

"And so I shall."

Hermione felt the wizard shift behind her, pulling his hips back from hers. His knot, having subsided just enough, released from her body and Severus slipped his still hard cock from her hot centre. Not waiting for the fire to once again take hold like he had during her last heat, he turned her to lay on her back and climbed atop her supine form.

"I wanted you here with me, Hermione, as lucid as circumstances would allow, as I take you as my own," Severus said huskily by her ear before lining himself up at her entrance and sinking into her once more.

A low moan left her, his words coupled with his actions causing the ache of arousal to coil tightly low in her belly. Unlike before, which had been hasty, primal, this time Severus thrust into her with slow, languid thrusts. The wizard took his time, worshipping her body as he brought her to the precipice of her undoing.

She felt his thrusts gain speed as his lips kissed and sucked a path down the column of her neck. The moment his lips touched the tender skin above her swollen gland her walls clenched around his cock as her orgasm took hold. Everything happened in an instant. As her body writhed in pleasure beneath his she felt his knot swell, his hips stilling as he pressed into her. In that very moment, her Alpha released a throaty growl, before his teeth sank into her flesh.

As her gland burst beneath her flesh and her body arched up into his, a distant voice in the recesses of her mind questioned why there was no pain. In fact, she was overcome by the pure ecstasy the sensation brought, her body – having not yet descended from the crescendo of her last orgasm before being thrust into the thralls of another – seized in pleasure, before she was swiftly pulled into blissful oblivion.

As she woke, she found herself in Severus' embrace. He held her body flush to his, the tip of his nose tracing a delicate path across where he had marked her.

"You smell divine," he whispered against her skin, evidently aware she had roused from her slumber.

Realising she had never asked him, Hermione turned in his arms to face him before she quietly asked, "What *do* I smell like to you?"

"Floral. Sweet, but not sickly. You smell of warmth and sunshine." Severus said, his lips curling up into a rare and genuine smile. "You are my sunflower."

Recalling what he had once confided in her of his Amortentia, she swelled with happiness. Severus Snape was a man of few words, but there was not a doubt left in her mind that this man loved her, just as she loved him.

"If I am your flower," she said. "Then you are the sun. For it was to you whom I turned in my darkest hour."

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